

Then the next year we did the Balanced Budget Act, and it has worked superbly. The only problem with it is that the Medicare cuts were too burdensome on certain groups, and we're trying to fix that. But I can tell you that if this tax cut passes, there will be breathtaking cuts in every area of our national life that you would believe is important, over and above what it would do to totally rob us of any chance to stabilize and improve Medicare and save it for the baby boom generation.

We have big tests as a country. How are we going to deal with the aging of America? How are we going to give all of our kids a world-class education, especially since more and more of them come from families whose first language is not English? Those of us who expect to be alive in 20 years, or hope to be, better hope we do a good job of educating those kids. How are we going to deal with all these other challenges? How are we going to bring economic opportunity to people who still haven't felt it? How are we going to stabilize the economy so that we'll still be growing even better 10, 15, 20 years from now? These are big challenges. But they are high-class problems in the sense that nations rarely get these opportunities.

Once-in-a-lifetime you get a chance to stand up with your country in good shape, bring people together, look down the road, and say, yes, these are big challenges, and we're going to check them off—one, two, three, four—because we have the money and the vision to deal with them.

So my appeal today is that we not get into a big fight; we just go back to basic arithmetic. These tax bills the majority is pushing could not get the support of their own Members if we had a chart up on the wall that says, here is what we have to spend just to stay where we are today in education, defense, the environment, medical research; here's what every expert says it takes to stabilize Medicare; here is the interest savings you ought to be putting into the Social Security Trust Fund; here is what we have to do to fix health care. They agree we have to do some more for veterans care. They agree with these things.

The numbers don't add up. We cannot take the vacation without paying the home

mortgage, the car payment, and the college loan bill. We can't do it. We can't eat the cake until the vegetables and the soup are out of the way. And we cannot defy the basic laws of arithmetic. And contrary to some of the debate, we cannot forget the stories.

This is about how millions upon millions upon millions of Americans will live. Will they live in dignity and health, or will they live in want and insecurity, imposing unconscionable burdens on their children, and limiting their children's ability to raise their grandchildren? Or will we use this moment to build a more prosperous, more just, more decent society? This is about way more than drugs and trips to the doctor. This is about what kind of people we are and whether we can look beyond today to the tomorrow we all want for all of us.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Judith G. Cato, member, Maryland Commission on Aging, who introduced the President. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks on the 25th Anniversary of the Legal Services Corporation

July 27, 1999

Thank you very much. Let me say, first of all, I apologize for being late. I've been over meeting with the Russian Prime Minister, and you would have given me a pass, I think. I was doing good work, I hope.

Lucy, thank you for your statement, and on behalf of all of us, for the award. Let me say, I could just sit here and sort of look at all the people that are here. I hesitate to even call people by name, but I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here, including Congressman Berman and Congressman Ramstad. I'd also—I see Mr. Conyers and Congressman Cardin, Congressman Allen, Congresswoman Waters, former Congressman Fox, and Father Drinan, we're glad to see you here, sir. Thank you. Sarge and Eunice Shriver; the ABA presidents, Jerry

Shestack, Bill Ide, Roberta Cooper Ramo, William Paul. And I see former Secretary of Commerce and Trade Ambassador Mickey Kantor, who was on the Legal Services board with Hillary.

We all go back a long way, all of us who care about this, it seems like. Doug Eakeley and Tom Allen and I, we went abroad together as young men 30 years ago. We must have gotten infected with a Legal Services virus. [*Laughter*] Judge Broderick, it's good to see you here. And Jim Ramstad said, we were there 36 years ago—is that how long it was? [*Laughter*] They're coming tomorrow; you should come back. Make you feel old, or young, as the case may be.

I want to say that for our family, the Legal Services Corporation has been very important. My wife has done many things I've been proud of, but I have never been more proud of anything than her service on the Legal Services Corporation to which President Carter appointed her, and the work she did as the chair of that Corporation.

You know, here in Washington, everybody's got a lawyer. Whether you need one or not, everybody's got a lawyer, you know? [*Laughter*] We forget what it's like to have a lawyer be the difference between homelessness and having a stable home; between unemployment and the security of a job; between the disintegration of a household and holding a family together in difficult times. The Legal Services Corporation has made equal justice not a political cause, but an everyday occurrence. We have tried to advocate that—I see our former chief advocate, Mr. Dellinger, there—but this is a personal thing for those of us who have experienced it.

Hillary's brother, in the back, was a public defender for many years in Miami. And Janet Reno, as a prosecutor, supported efforts to make sure that everybody had a decent defense—something that I think is a sterling example.

Every one of you in this room has that sort of story. But those of us who are old enough to remember when it was different feel it perhaps the more strongly. And I want to thank Howard Berman and Jim Ramstad for giving voice to the struggles we're now engaged in in Congress. Sometimes I think

that the Legal Services Corporation, even though it's very young—25 years old—is suffering from the infirmity of its success and, perhaps, from the success of our economy at this moment that we have people who may make this decision without the benefit of memory. So I ask you to remember.

It was in 1962, not that long ago, when the Supreme Court had not yet established a constitutional right to counsel in criminal cases. Then the idea of legal assistance in civil cases was a distant dream. Disadvantaged Americans who had a hard enough time just getting through the day found that the legal system was stacked against them, and even if it wasn't, they couldn't possibly know it because they couldn't get a lawyer.

Our country's faith in the law was strained in the hearts of many because of injustice and the stain of racism. But the men and women who founded the Legal Services Corporation knew that educating people about the legal rights they did have was critical in the fight for equal rights; that if people did not know about their rights and could not exercise them, the fact that the Supreme Court had enshrined them was of little practical impact.

Today, thanks in large measure to the efforts of the Legal Services Corporation and the countless lawyers you have inspired, it is clear that a lot of progress has been made. Lucy's story really tells the tale. The doors of opportunity are open wider, and we are fortunate now to be living in a period of unique prosperity, with the lowest minority unemployment in our history and the highest homeownership in our history. We have the lowest crime rates and welfare rolls in a generation. But you and I know there are still a lot of poor folks out there. There are still people in places that have been left behind, even by this great recovery.

I traveled across the country a couple of weeks ago, from Appalachia to the Mississippi Delta, to East St. Louis, to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, south Phoenix, and East Los Angeles. And there are still people out there—most of them, by the way, are working; most of them are working, doing the same thing you and I do every day, for much lesser rewards—who are having enormous difficulties. So we have this.

It is also true that in spite of the progress that we've made in meeting the promise of equal justice, there are still a lot of people out there who don't trust the legal system or the law enforcement system. So there is a need, a crying need for the work of the Legal Services Corporation. And that's idealistic, hard-working lawyers—virtually 100 percent of whom could be making a lot more money doing something else—who believe that the law should be an instrument that benefits us all equally and that the rights that are enunciated in the law books and in the Supreme Court cases should be real in the lives of all Americans.

President Kennedy did call for equal justice here 36 years ago. Last week in this room, with another glittering array of legal talent, from lawyers to judges to scholars of all races and backgrounds in this country, we renewed our pledge to that ideal.

Today I think we have to say again, equal justice is the birthright of every American. It is the obligation of those of us in public life and politics to try to bring the benefits of this economic recovery into every corner of our country. But the Scripture says that the poor will be with us always. But American law says they will not be disadvantaged under the law. And until we close the gap between our principles and our reality, we will need the Legal Services Corporation.

For years now, some in Congress have tried to dismantle it. They have seen it as a political thing. I do not believe it is political to say a poor person should have the same right as a rich person. I do not believe it is political to say we have to bring the law into the real lives of all Americans.

We have stood firm against the opposition to the Legal Services Corporation. I'm proud that every budget we have submitted has requested more funding for Legal Services. Like Congressman Ramstad and Congressman Berman—and by their presence here, all the other Members who are here—I was deeply disappointed that last week the Appropriations Subcommittee in the House voted to cut my request in half, leaving hundreds of thousands of American families without the critical legal protections they need.

But need is the wrong word. Under the law, they are entitled to them as citizens. For 25 years, the Legal Services Corporation has stood above the fray of partisanship, but in the fray of the grimy details of daily life that require legal protection and legal assistance. I ask Congress to put politics aside, to follow on this issue the model of the Legal Services Corporation, and give the full funding and support the Corporation needs. In a very large budget, it is a very small item. But it has an enormous impact.

Think how outraged Americans of both political parties in all political philosophies would have been if this fine woman and all of her fellow tenants had been thrown on the street for failure to pay electric bills that they paid. We could have passed the hat in America and collected the annual budget of the Legal Services Corporation to help them. You know that's true. How then can we walk away from the people who save them, and can save so many like them every day, in every way—in publicized and quiet ways that we will never know?

Thomas Jefferson once said that equal justice is a bright constellation of our political faith. With conscience and conviction, let us get the support for the Legal Services Corporation it needs. We cannot let the bright constellation dim. Twenty-five is too young, and there are still too many people out there who need you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Sergey Stepashin of Russia; Legal Services Corporation client Lucy Johnson, who introduced the President; former Representative Jon D. Fox; R. Sargent Shriver, honorary cochairman, Consortium for the National Equal Justice Library, and his wife, Eunice Kennedy Shriver; Father Robert F. Drinan, professor of law, Georgetown University; Jerome J. Shestack, R. William Ide III, Roberta Cooper Ramo, former presidents, and William G. Paul, president-elect, American Bar Association; Douglas Eakeley, chair, Legal Services Corporation board of directors; retired Marin County, CA, Superior Court Judge Henry J. Broderick; former Justice Department Solicitor General Walter E. Dellinger; and the First Lady's brother, Hugh

Rodham. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Statement on the Death of Dan Dutko

July 27, 1999

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the untimely death of our good friend Dan Dutko. Dan has been a friend, an ally, and an adviser for nearly three decades. He enriched our lives with his enthusiasm and served his country with distinction. He deeply believed in the cause of the Democratic Party and worked tirelessly to ensure that it would have the ability to communicate effectively with the voters. He was a devoted supporter of Israel and a champion of national service.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Deborah, and their two young children, Matthew and Jonathan.

Statement on House Action To Extend Normal Trade Relations With China

July 27, 1999

I welcome the strong bipartisan vote in the House today to extend normal trade relations (NTR) with China.

Extending NTR is the right way to advance America's interests. Our exports to China have nearly tripled over the past decade to \$14.2 billion. NTR boosts not only America's economy, but also those of Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as China.

NTR promotes China's integration into the global economy, which in turn strengthens market-oriented reformers within China. Expanding trade can help bring greater social change to China by spreading the tools, contacts, and ideas that promote freedom. Maintaining NTR helps us to move China toward global norms on human rights, weapons of mass destruction, crime and drugs, and the environment, as well as on trade. China clearly has far to go in all these areas, and we will continue to address our differences directly and protect our national interests.

I remain determined to pursue an agreement for China to join the WTO on viable commercial terms—not as a favor to China but as a means of opening and reforming China's markets and holding China to the rules of the global trading system. I remain ready to work closely with Congress to secure permanent NTR status for China in the context of a commercially strong WTO agreement.

Statement on the Organization of African Unity's Framework Agreement for Ethiopia and Eritrea

July 27, 1999

I welcome the announcement by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that Ethiopia and Eritrea have accepted the OAU Framework Agreement and the Modalities for its implementation, and agreed to steps proposed by the OAU to facilitate implementation of the Agreement. This is a significant step toward peace.

We have worked intensively with the OAU in recent weeks to help bring an end to this devastating conflict. My Special Envoy, Anthony Lake, has just returned from the region, where he met with the leaders of both governments and the OAU. The United States will continue to support the efforts of the OAU under the chairmanship of Algerian President Bouteflika to bring this tragic conflict to a speedy conclusion.

Remarks to the American Legion Boys Nation and Girls Nation

July 28, 1999

Thank you very much. I always look forward to your coming every year because I know we'll have plenty of enthusiasm to light up the old house here. *[Laughter]*

Let me begin by thanking Secretary Riley, who is, I'm almost sure, the longest serving Secretary of Education in American history, and I am quite sure the finest Secretary of Education we have ever had. And I thank him for his service.

I would like to thank the officials of Boys and Girls Nation who are here: the American Legion National Commander, Butch Miller;

Boys Nation Director Ron Engel; Director of Activities Jack Mercier, who was a counselor when I was at Boys Nation, in 1904 or whenever—[*laughter*]—a long time ago—1963—Girls Nation Director Dianne McClung, Youth Program Coordinator Kenya Ostermeier.

I'd also like to acknowledge the presence in the audience of some alumni of Boys and Girls Nation: Congressman Jim Ramstad of Minnesota, who was there with me in 1963—stand up, Jim. [*Applause*] And I see one of my two White House staffers who is an alumnus, Fred Duval of Arizona, who is here. [*Applause*] Thank you. And Janet Murguia from Kansas is—I don't know if she's here or not, but she went to Girls Nation—a long time after I did. [*Laughter*]

I also can't help noting that—I think the State of Nevada today is represented by Patrick Sergeant. His father, Colonel Steve Sergeant, is the new Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council here at the White House, and we're glad to have his service. [*Applause*] Thank you very much.

I want to thank your Boys Nation and Girls Nation officers who are here: Vice President Denise Battle and Vice President John Feeny. If Al Gore were here, he would tell you that's a very important job. [*Laughter*] And I might say it is a very important job.

The Vice President has this great joke. He says every time he votes, we win. [*Laughter*] And as all of you know, we only vote when there's a tie in the Senate. And actually, we've had some of the more important—perhaps one of the two or three most important votes taken in the Senate in my term as President was the vote on the economic plan of 1993, which led to big reduction in the deficit and gave us the biggest leg up on the balanced budget. It was a tie vote, and the Vice President broke the tie. So you might think about that as you contemplate your future. It's a good thing to break ties.

I want to thank President Teah Frederick and President Ryan Rippel for their comments and their example.

I look forward to this day every year, partly because of my own memories of being at Boys Nation and the debates we had. When you talked about the issues you were dealing with—we had this huge debate on civil rights

in 1963, and I was one of the four representatives from the South that voted for the civil rights plank. And in the light of history, it looks pretty good. I feel good about it. But I've never forgotten what it was like that week hearing from the Cabinet members, meeting Senators and Congressmen, and all the debates that occurred.

I've never forgotten that President Kennedy met with us and made us feel that public service is a noble endeavor and that we all could make a difference. And I hope all of you feel that way, because your country needs you. You have so much to give.

One of the young people here today may go on to be President. One might command the first human mission to Mars. One might develop a cure for cancer or AIDS. Perhaps you will teach the next generation of young people or help to alleviate poverty or violence in your own communities. As long as you keep setting goals and working hard and using your talent for the common good, there's no limit to what you can do. And America needs you.

This country has been around a long time because we have remained faithful to our ideals, but forever young and open to change. I don't want to conduct a tour of the White House today, but the old house was finished in 1800. So, on our millennial year, we will celebrate the 200th birthday of the White House. The painting of George Washington to my left, to your right, was painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1797 and purchased for the then enormous sum of \$500, for the White House. It is priceless today.

But it's worth remembering how important it is to keep democracy alive, that in 1814, when we were in the last throes of the War of 1812 and the British were coming up the Potomac, the President of the United States, James Madison—who was the last President to be the active Commander in Chief for the Armed Forces, and so was up in Maryland, where he mistakenly thought the British would be—at the head of an army, sent word back to his wife, Dolley, who was preparing this vast banquet—the White House was full of food; this room was full of food—that the British were on the way and she should get out, but no matter what,

she had to take the picture of George Washington.

So Dolley Madison cut that picture out of its frame, rolled it up, and got out of the White House. The British arrived to find the empty frame, ate the food, and burned the house. [*Laughter*] But we rebuilt the house, and the picture still lives. And every time I see that picture, I think about it.

It was in this room that Thomas Jefferson met with his secretary, Merriwether Lewis, to plan the Lewis and Clark expedition—right where you're all sitting. The place was covered with bearskins and ancient maps, and they were—President Jefferson was in love with the geography and science, and he saw this whole thing as not only a geographical expedition, but he thought that all kinds of scientific information would be gathered along the way. So a lot of very important things have happened where you are sitting today that remind us that America is a place with great opportunities and great responsibilities.

Today, our country is the greatest force for peace and security and human rights and prosperity in the world. We have the longest peacetime expansion in our history. We have almost 18, 19 million new jobs now. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest crime rate in 26 years, the smallest welfare rolls in 30 years. Our social problems, in general, are getting better. Teen drug abuse, pregnancy, teen smoking are declining. And the country is learning to live with the most amazing array of diversity—racial diversity, ethnic diversity, religious diversity—and still find a way to be bound together as one community.

This is a very important time. And rather like you at this time in your life, your always-young Nation faces the question of what to do with our prosperity and our promise, just as you face the personal question of what to do with your promise. Will we seize this chance of a lifetime to meet the long-term challenges of America, to ensure that when you are our age, you will have a great country to live in and cherish and pass on to your children and grandchildren? I would argue that that is the real challenge we face today, just as you must decide whether you're will-

ing to continue to forgo certain things today in order to achieve your goals tomorrow.

Will we invest in creating the best system of education in the world, with smaller classes, better-prepared teachers, modern and safe schools? Will we save Social Security and Medicare before the baby boomers retire and the number of people over 65 doubles, which will happen in 30 years? Will we make America debt-free for the first time since 1835, and so ensure your prosperity, and do those things which will enable economic opportunity to come to the people and places who still have not felt this recovery?

These are some, but not all, of the great long-term questions before us as a nation, as you gather here. And so we're having this enormous debate in Washington. It is a good-faith debate, based on competing visions and values. It will help us to define what we see as our most fundamental responsibilities to our parents, to our children. It is a debate about the future of our Nation and, to be sure, about your future.

I want to talk just a minute about it today, because it is a debate that 6½ years ago, when I was taking office, no one thought we would ever have. Everywhere I go in America now I say, "You know, when I was here in 1992, if I had said to you, 'Now, I want you to vote for me and in 6½ years from now, I'll come back and we'll talk about what to do with the surplus,' they would have laughed me out of the room. I never would have carried a single State. They would have said, 'That poor young man seems like a nice fellow, but he's terribly out of touch.'" [*Laughter*] Because we had a \$290 billion deficit, high interest rates; we had averaged 7 percent unemployment for a long time, and we quadrupled the national debt in 12 years.

All I could do was to tell the American people I was going to bring the debt down; I would do my best to balance the budget; and if we did it, we'd get interest rates down, and investment would come up. And I said, but we had to do it in a way that allowed us to continue to invest in education, in the environment, in health care and research, the things that were critical to our future.

So that's what I did. You probably won't remember this because you were all young, but in the year I ran for President in 1992,

one of the best selling books—quite a well-written book, written by two journalists from Philadelphia—was entitled: “America: What Went Wrong?” Thanks to the hard work of the American people, our country has made a seismic shift in the last 6 years. Now we’re looking at \$99 billion in surplus this year, and we look forward to a new decade of budget surpluses and a new century full of confidence and pride.

I’m also proud that while we have eliminated the deficit and produced the surpluses, we nearly doubled our investments in education and training programs, because that is the most effective investment we can make in our long-term future. Without good teachers and high expectations, I wouldn’t be here today. But education is even more important to your generation and will be even more important to those coming along behind you because of the nature of the way the information age works.

Secretary Riley has already talked about the historic investments we’ve made to open the doors of college to every American, to do more for underprivileged children, to try to make sure every classroom in the country is hooked up to the Internet by the year 2000, and that because of the so-called E-rate, even the poorest schools will be able to afford to log on in all those classrooms—and the other things that we’re trying to do.

This year Congress is debating whether to work with us to finish the job that Congress made an initial commitment to last year of hiring 100,000 teachers so we can lower class size to an average of 18 in the first 3 grades all across the country. And I have asked Congress to pass a tax incentive to help us build or modernize 6,000 schools across America, because enormous numbers of young people are going to schools that are very, very old, a lot of them not even capable of being wired; and a lot of other young children are in house trailers out beside the old schools because we now have, finally, a class of school-children bigger than the baby boomers. And we have to do more in that regard.

I have also asked Congress to help us to strengthen performance—with higher standards for schools, for teachers, for students—to say that Federal aid should go only to those schools that end social promotion but also

provide summer school programs, after-school programs, and extra help to turn schools around that aren’t doing the job.

So far, the main thing that the Congress has heard in all this is the siren call of large tax cuts on the theory that we have a surplus, it’s your money, and we ought to give it back to you. Now, it only takes 5 seconds to say that, and it sounds great. I heard one Member of Congress the other day, in all seriousness, said, “If you let them”—referring to the President and the members of my party—“if you let them keep your money, they’ll spend it on their friends.”

Well, what I have proposed to do is to take most of the surplus and set it aside for Social Security and Medicare, and in the years when we don’t use the money, use that to pay down the debt so we can be debt-free in 15 years, for the first time since 1835, which means lower interest rates for everybody, more investment, more jobs, higher incomes and, for your families, lower mortgage rates, college loan rates, credit card rates, and car payment costs. And it would guarantee the long-term stability of the country. I think that’s the right thing to do.

And I have also proposed to spend adequate amounts of money to continue the Federal role’s investment in education and medical research, national defense, and other things and then to take what’s left and spend it on a tax cut. It is, admittedly, much smaller than the one that the majority approved.

Now, they believe—to be fair—it is your money, it’s the taxpayers’ money. And they believe that the best thing to do is to give it back. It would cost about \$800 billion over the next 10 years and \$3 trillion over the 10 years after that. Sounds like an unimaginable sum—that’s real money there. And that’s when the baby boomers will be retiring.

Now, the problem I have with it is that under their plan, to be fair, we could save the Social Security surplus to pay down the debt, partially, but we would not lengthen the life of the Social Security Trust Fund or the Medicare Trust Fund, and we’d have to have big cuts in education and the other items that I’ve mentioned. But people would get the tax cut. But that would be the price tag; in other words, it’s not free. So we’re having this big debate.